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SEWING WOMEN'S SLACKS AND SHORTS



EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
COOPERATING WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND THE COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS.
E. F. FROLIK, DEAN; J. L. ADAMS, DIRECTOR

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PANTS MEASUREMENT CHART

	Your Measurement	Ease Allowance	Pattern Measurement	Adjustment (+ or -)
Waist		1/2 to 1"		
Hips (____ inches below waistline)		1 1/2" to 2 1/2"		
Crotch Length (seated)		1/2" on small size to 1 inch on large sizes		
Crotch Seam (standing)		2" to 3"		
Thigh (____ inches below waistline)		2" to 3"		
Knee		2" to 3"		
Calf		2" to 3"		
Instep		Finished edge must not be less than instep measurement	Measure distance around hem of pant legs	
Finished Side Length				
Side Length to Knee				

SEWING WOMEN'S SLACKS and SHORTS

Anna Marie Kreifels
Area Extension Agent
(Home Economics)

INTRODUCTION

Pants are found in almost every woman's wardrobe. There are all sorts of pants—slacks, pedal pushers, shorts, capris, bell-bottoms and others as styled and named by fashion. Pants are considered appropriate dress for many occasions and activities.

Sewing pants is not difficult but the finished garment is often a disappointment because of poor fit. Pants don't have to bag in the seat, bind at the knees or sag at the waist. With careful attention to measurements and fit, any woman can sew pants that will feel comfortable and look neat when worn.

SELECTING PATTERN AND FABRIC

Pants patterns are purchased according to waist measurement if waist and hips are near average proportion. Check the measurement chart on the pattern envelope. Buy a pattern to fit the hip measurement if the hips are large in proportion to the waist. Altering the waist is easier than making alterations at the hipline.

Fabrics which are pliable and have some "give," or a slight degree of stretch, are preferred for women's pants. Curved seams and darts are easier to press in these fabrics. Stiff, firm and hard finish fabrics are difficult to handle and sometimes the finished garment is disappointing.

TAKING MEASUREMENTS

Accurate measurements are important. Figures with identical waist and hip sizes may require different lengths in the legs, the crotch or the darts, due to variations in body contour and proportion. Measure over a girdle if you normally wear one with pants. Have someone take your measurements and record them on the Pants Measurement Chart, page 2.

Tie a heavy cord around the waist to establish the exact waistline. Take a snug, but not tight, waist measurement.

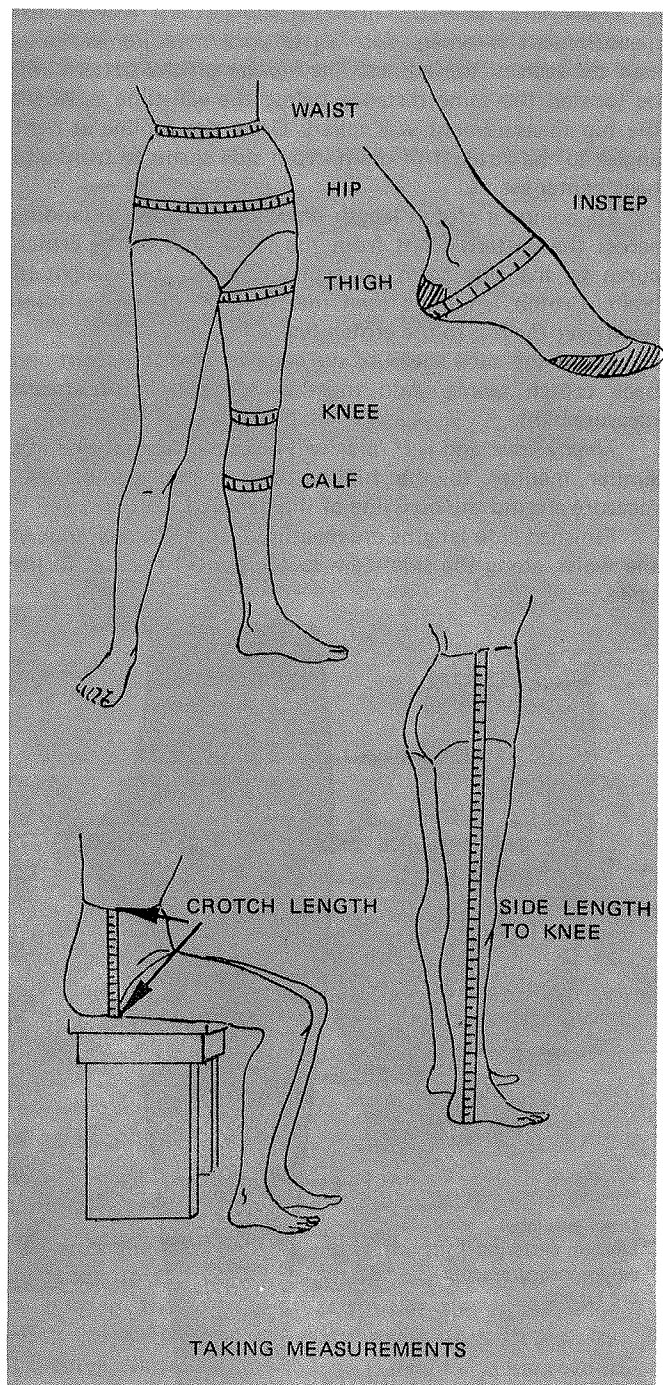
Hip measurement is taken wherever the hips are largest. This can vary from 5 to 11 inches below the waistline depending on body contour. Record both the hip measurement and the distance below the waistline at which it was taken.

To measure crotch length sit on a flat, hard chair or table. Measure from the cord at the waistline, over the hip, to the chair.

Stand in a normal position to measure crotch seam. Measure between the legs from the cord at the front waistline to the cord at the back waistline.

Measure around the thigh at the fullest part of the upper leg. Record this measurement and the distance below the waistline at which it was taken. Then measure around the knee, the calf of the leg and the instep.

Finished side length is measured from the cord at the waistline down the side of the leg to the ankle, or to the point where pants will end. Also measure side length from the waistline to the knee.



DETERMINING AND MAKING ALTERATIONS

Major alterations should be made before the garment is cut, therefore, pattern pieces should be measured at points corresponding to where body measurements were taken. Do not measure across darts and stitching lines of seams.

Ease allowances permit body movement when a garment is worn. Because patterns are designed with ease, the pieces will measure slightly larger than body measurements. Standard ease allowances given on the Pants Measurement Chart should be added to the body measurements before comparing with pattern measurements.

For a tight fit, use the smaller ease allowance; for an easy fit, use the greater allowance.

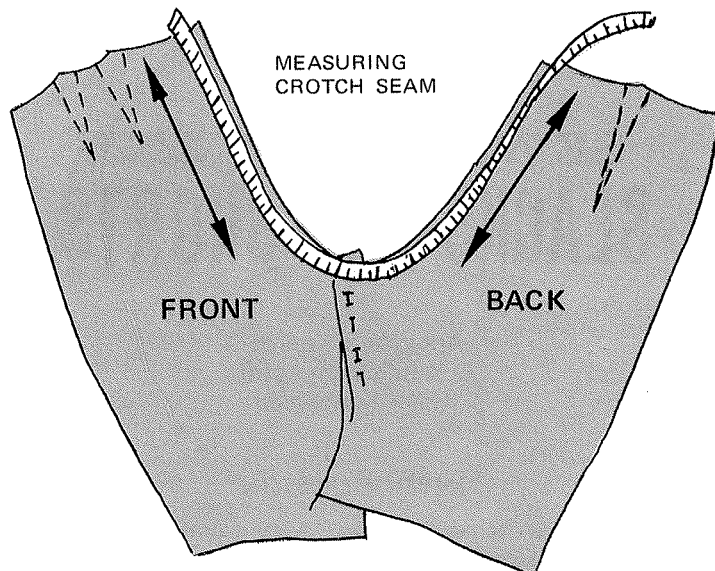
Draw and label the lines on the pattern where each measurement is taken. Also write your measurement plus ease on each of these lines. The *hipline* on the pattern will be located the same distance below the waistline as where the hip measurement was taken. Draw the hipline at right angles to the straight of grain, from side seams to front and back center seams.

To compare crotch length draw a *crotch line* extending across the pattern front from the lower end of the crotch curve to the side seam, at right angles to the straight of grain. Crotch length is then measured from the waistline seam over the hip to the crotch line.

Stand the tape measure on edge to measure front and back crotch seams. Add together for total *crotch seam* measurement.

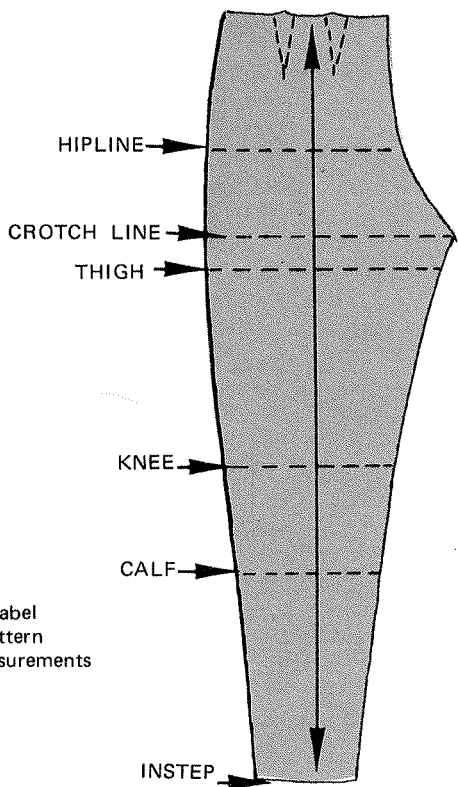
Thigh, knee and calf lines will be drawn and labeled in a similar manner to the hipline. For instep comparison, measure around the hem line of the pant leg.

Finished side lengths are measured from the seam line at the waist, along the side seam to the pants hem and to the knee.

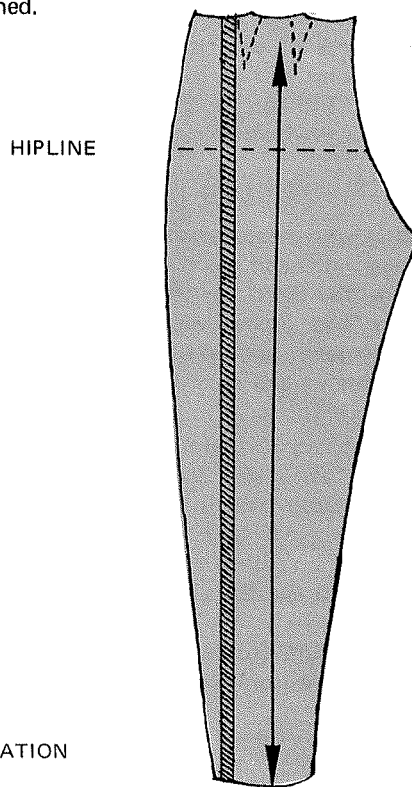


Compare pattern and body measurements, calculating and recording necessary alterations. A "minus" alteration will indicate the pattern must be made smaller; a "plus" means the pattern needs to be enlarged. Before starting any alterations, complete the measurement comparisons and extend straight of grain lines the full length of all pattern pieces.

Waistline: Waistline alterations of 1 inch or less may be made at the side seams. Divide the total amount of "plus" or "minus" by 4 (the number of seam edges). Then add or remove this amount at each side seam, tapering the new seam to the original seam line at the hip. If more than 1 inch alteration is needed either increase or decrease the width of darts and center front and back seams. An alteration up to 1/4 inch may be made on each dart and center seam without affecting the original garment design. Remember too, a slight excess at the waist can be "eased in" when the waistband is attached.

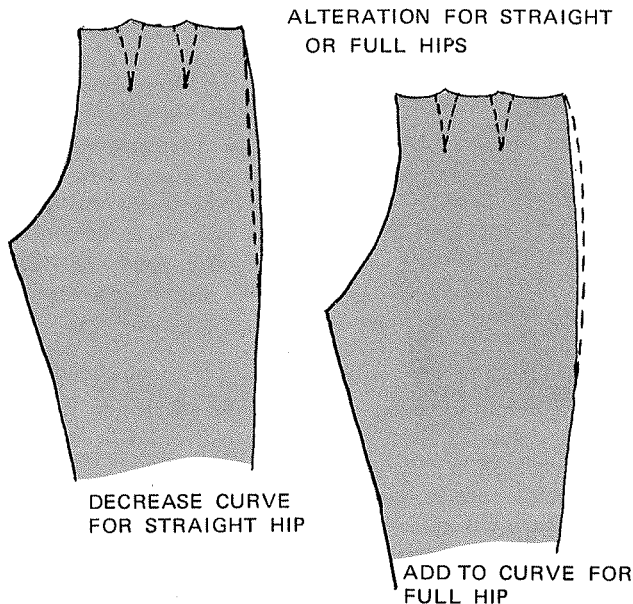


Draw and label lines on pattern where measurements are taken.



HIPLINE ALTERATION

Hipline: Most hip alterations are made on a vertical line parallel to the straight of grain. Slash and spread the pattern to increase the hip measurement; to decrease, take a tuck in the pattern. Either alteration should extend the entire length of the pattern. Half the required alteration should be on the front and half on the back.

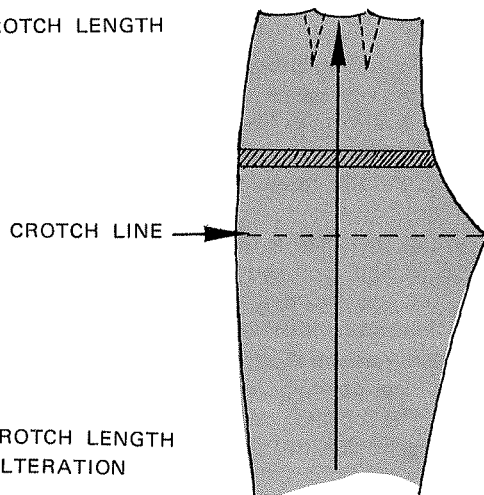


Now analyze the body contour. If hips curve more than average, add a slight amount to the curve at the front and back side seams. If hips are very straight, decrease the curve at the side seams. Taper these alterations to the original line at the waist and slightly below the crotch.

If the abdomen protrudes more than average make a slight addition only to the front side seams. In case of a prominent derriere and a flat abdomen, add a small amount to back side seams, but not to the front. Try to make allowances as needed by body contours.

Crotch Length: To shorten the crotch, fold the excess length into a tuck from side seam to center seam. Length is added by slashing across the pattern and spreading it to add the required amount. Place the tuck or slash below the points of the darts and above the crotch line. Alter both front and back patterns in the same way.

CROTCH LENGTH

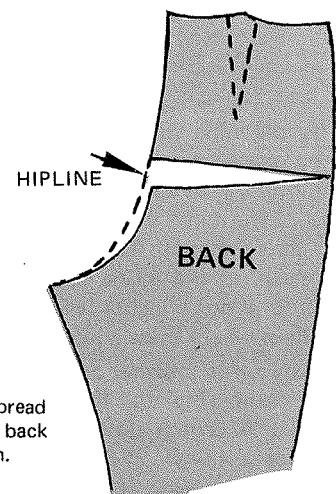
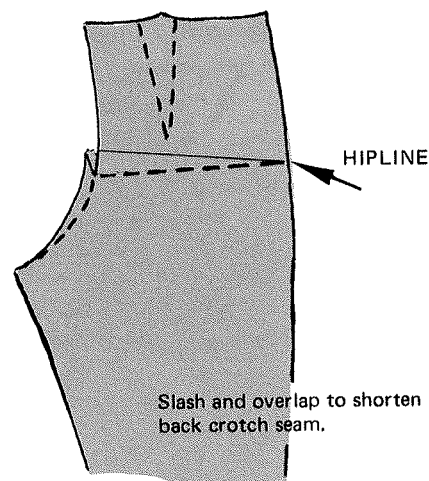


Crotch Seam: A crotch seam can be shortened during construction by stitching wider seams on inside leg seams. A wider waistline seam at center front and back will also shorten the crotch.

Poor fit in the seat of pants can be caused by too much length in the back crotch seam. It is difficult to determine before cutting if pants will "bag" in the seat, and once pants are cut the problem is not easily remedied. Altering at the waistline will not solve this problem.

The figure with a flat derriere or a swayback is likely to experience a baggy seat problem. If you think this problem is likely to occur, try the pattern in muslin and notice fit in the seat area. As you fit the pants pin out excess fullness in a crosswise tuck. The tuck will be widest at the center back and tapered to nothing at the side seam. Immediately alter the pattern so you won't cut another pair of pants with a baggy seat.

CROTCH SEAM ALTERATIONS

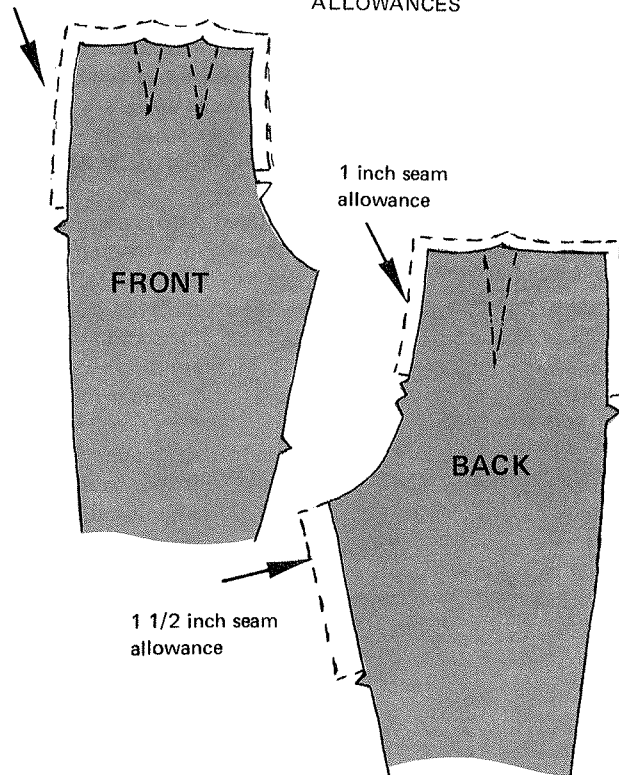


To alter the pattern slash along the hipline mark from center back to *but not through* the side seam. At center back overlap the lower cut edge over the upper edge, tapering the overlap to nothing at the side seam. Redraw the crotch curve. Narrower waistline darts might also improve fit over a flat derriere.

For the prominent derriere lengthen the back crotch seam. To do this slash the pattern along the hipline mark from center back to *but not through* the side seam. Spread the pattern at the center back and taper the spread to nothing at the side seam. Redraw the crotch curve. Wider darts might help improve fit.

1 inch seam allowance

PLANNING EXTRA SEAM ALLOWANCES



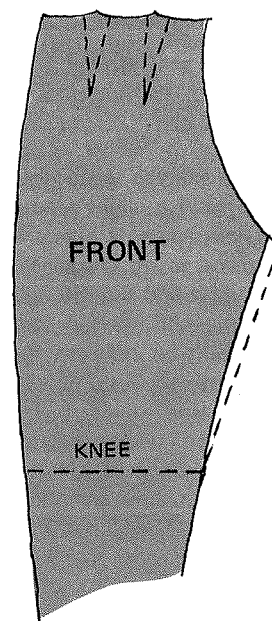
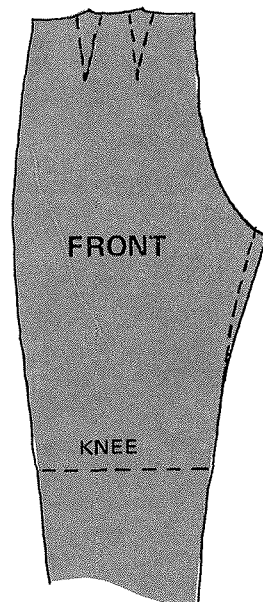
By planning extra seam allowances before cutting you can be prepared to lengthen the crotch seam when pants are being fitted. Plan to cut 1 inch allowances on side and center seams of front and back from the hipline to the waist. Allow for 1 inch seams on front and back waist edges. Allow 1 1/2 inch seam on the inside leg of the back pattern from the crotch to about 8 inches below the crotch. Mark the original seam lines where these additions were made.

Baste pants together on the original seam lines. Try them on, remembering to fit in both standing and sitting positions. A crotch seam that is too short will bind or the pants will pull down at the waist when you sit.

To lengthen the center back seam open the inside leg seam near the crotch and let out the *back* leg seam. Keep the original 5/8 inch allowance on the front leg seam. Other adjustments can be made at the waistline and side seams to get a comfortable fit.

Thighs and Legs: For heavier or thinner than average thighs, width must be either added or taken in at the front and back inside leg seams near the crotch. Taper alterations to the original seam line above the knee. Be sure to allow ample ease.

THIGH ALTERATIONS



Knee, calf and instep alterations may be made by adding to or taking in the side seams and inside leg seams below the crotch curve and above the hem. Equal alterations must be made on all seam edges to keep the crease lines in the center of the knee. Carefully retain the gradual slope of the leg seam lines.

The width of pant legs is determined by fashion trends. The wider pants legs look more presentable and are more comfortable on the figure with heavy thighs and knees. Good proportion results if the width of the pants leg is equal to the calf measurement. A semi-tapered look results if the finished pants leg opening is 1 inch less than the calf measurement. The opening must be at least equal to the instep measurement to allow the foot to slip through.

Finished Side Length: Alterations in side length are best made in the lower leg area, below the knee. To add length slash the pattern and spread; tuck the pattern to decrease length. After adjusting length recheck the pattern width at the knee, calf and instep to assure adequate ease.

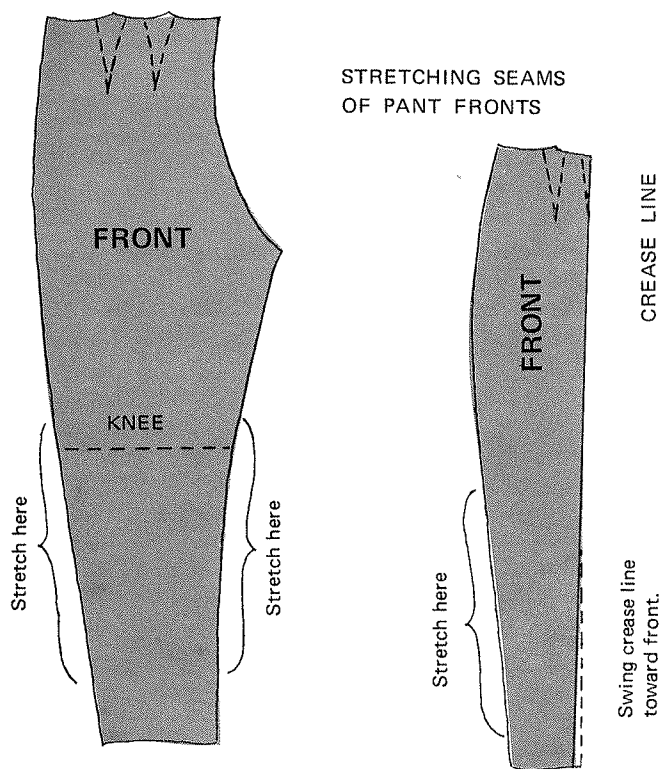
HINTS FOR BETTER FIT

A new pattern can be tried on inexpensive fabric or muslin for a trial fit. Make needed adjustments and transfer these to your pattern.

Mark, press or "set" the front crease lines in the pant legs before starting to sew. Crease lines should be on straight of grain and should fall midway between the inside leg seam and the side seam.

Contour of the calf of the leg can cause pant legs to pull toward the back, forcing the hems against the shins and causing baggy knees. A stretching and pressing technique before leg seams are stitched can help prevent these problems.

Starting about 3 inches above the knee line stretch the side and inside leg seams of the pant *fronts* only. Stop stretching about 3 inches above the hem. Stretch until 1/4 to 1/2 inch length is added to the seam edges. Fold and press the crease lines, swinging the seam edges slightly toward the front. Trim the excess 1/4 to 1/2 inch from the pant fronts, taking an even amount all the way across the lower edge. When fronts and backs are stitched together this shaping process will cause hems to hang with equal distribution of width toward the front and back of the legs.



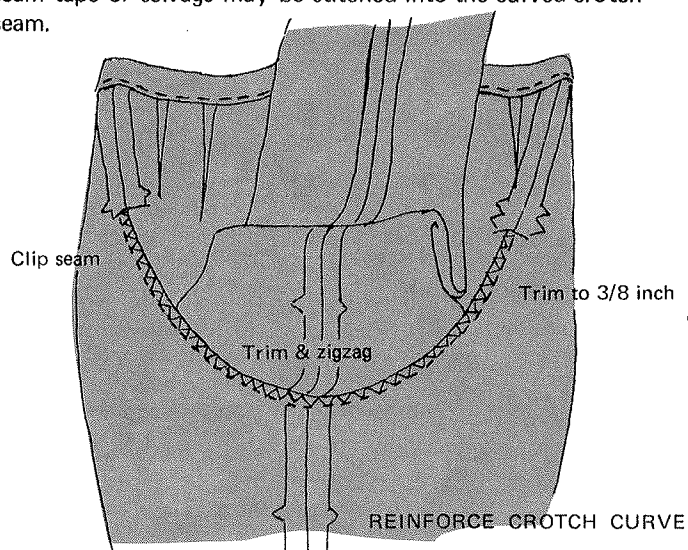
Darts permit flat fabric to fit over curves. Darts should be altered in length, depth and position to fit smoothly over body curves. Stitch darts to sharp points and press as shown on the pattern guide.

Stitch the center back and front seams leaving 1 inch of the seam open at the crotch until fit is established. Stretch the crotch *curve* of the *back seam* as you stitch. This helps prevent this seam from splitting when pants are worn. Do not stretch the front crotch curve.

Stitch the inside leg seams, leaving 1 inch open in the crotch area. Side seams are stitched with the placket left open. Ease the pants to the waistband and baste for a first fitting. There will be about 1 inch ease placed mainly at the sides over the hip curves. Do not ease at center back between darts.

Now try on the pants. Remember to sit down as you fit. Check for discomforts and misfits; then make necessary adjustments. After fit is established, stitch the inner leg seams before stitching the crotch seam. Pants fits better if the crotch seam crosses the leg seams.

Reinforce the crotch curves with a second row of stitching very near the first stitching. Remember to stretch the *back crotch curve* as you stitch. For additional reinforcement a narrow piece (1/4 inch wide) of twill tape, seam tape or selvage may be stitched into the curved crotch seam.



Center front and back seams may be pressed open from the waist to the notches above the crotch curve. At the notches clip through the seam allowances almost to the stitching line. Below this point trim the curved seam to about 3/8 inch; overcast, zigzag or stitch the trimmed edges together. The curved crotch seam will tend to "stand up" when pants are worn, so it need not be pressed flat.

Zipper insertion, waistband, hems and closures are done as directed on the pattern guide.

THE FINAL PRESS

Pressing the finished pants will be easy if front creases were set before you started sewing. The front creases will stop just below the waist darts. They may be edge-stitched to form permanent crease lines in fabrics which do not hold a sharp crease.

The position of the front creases will serve as a guide for setting the back creases. Back creases stop at the crotch; they are seldom edge-stitched. Use heat, moisture and a pounding block to form sharp creases.

Darts and seams pressed during the construction process will need only touch-up pressing when pants are finished.